

COMMENDING THE ACTIONS OF CUBAN HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST JOSE DANIEL FERRER GARCIA, AND ALL PRO-DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, IN DEMANDING FUNDAMENTAL CIVIL LIBERTIES IN CUBA AND SPEAKING OUT AGAINST CUBA'S BRUTAL, TOTALITARIAN COMMUNIST REGIME

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, yesterday marked 6 months since July 11—a day when brave Cubans all across that island marched for democracy, cried out for freedom, and sent a clear message that the time was up for the illegitimate communist regime.

From Havana to Santa Clara to Santiago de Cuba, the message of "Patria y Vida!" could be heard from the people. Cuban families and demonstrators stood against the revolution's motto of "Patria o Muerte" to once again declare that the revolution had failed.

That failed revolution promised prosperity and equality for all, but the only equal thing about it was poverty, suffering, and oppression for all. We watched as families gathered outside the headquarters of the Cuban Communist Party to chant "Cuba isn't yours!" Their message was clear: It is time for a new day of freedom and democracy in Cuba.

Instead of listening to the cries of their people, the communist Cuban regime lashed out with violence and the oppression it has used for more than 60 years to silence opposition to its reign. The regime and its thugs kidnapped innocent democracy activists and kept others trapped in their homes. Right now, hundreds of Cubans have been indefinitely detained or unjustly sentenced to prison simply for demanding basic human rights.

Some of these protesters are facing prison sentences as long as 30 years. One of them is Jose Daniel Ferrer, the leader of the pro-democracy UNPACU group and a dedicated freedom and human rights activist. Since his detainment, I have had the chance to talk to his family several times. Each time we speak, the stories they tell me are more heartbreaking.

Jose Daniel is being tortured by the communist regime in an attempt to end his life. He is suffering from severe headaches, mouth bleeding, malnutrition, cough, and insomnia—all products of the cruel torture and inhumane treatment from the regime.

We can also think about Felix Navarro, another longtime freedom activist who helps lead a pro-democracy group on the island. He was arrested, not for demonstrating but for asking police about the status of some of the members of his group who had been detained.

Reports indicate even young teenagers are being detained indefinitely.

The unjust imprisonment, beatings, and torture of the Cuban people is abhorrent. It is inhumane, and it cannot

be tolerated. It is clear that these actions stem from the regime's paralyzing fear over the freedom movement spreading across Cuba. They are terrified that there is a new day of freedom on the rise for the Cuban people, so they resort to total oppression and to the silencing of any mention of independence or freedom.

As the greatest beacon of freedom and democracy in the world, the United States must stand against the communist regime and with the Cuban people. I am thankful that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Brian Nichols recently called for the immediate release of the July 11 demonstrators. Along with his calls, we need the voices of President Biden and Secretary Blinken, and their calls need to be coupled with action that actually pressures the illegitimate communist Cuban regime now.

It was only a couple of weeks ago when I called the White House to talk about the case of Jose Daniel Ferrer. The first time I called, they asked me to leave a message, so I did. When I called the next day, the White House hung up on me.

Throughout his entire first year in office, Joe Biden has been shamefully silent about Cuba. Just like he does with communist China, Biden's strategy on Cuba is to do the bare minimum. Even while the protests were ongoing, he did nothing to alleviate the suffering of the Cuban people.

Compare that to the Organization of American States. After I spoke with them a few weeks ago, Secretary General Luis Almagro issued a statement demanding the immediate release of all arbitrarily imprisoned political prisoners. He expressed special concern for the well-being of Jose Daniel Ferrer and urged the Cuban regime to allow a humanitarian mission that can immediately verify the state and situation of political prisoners in the country.

Why can't Joe Biden make that same request? Where is the President? He has had 6 months to help provide internet to the Cuban people to help disseminate information and help the freedom movement, but he has done nothing. His silence is appeasement, and those of us who love freedom will not simply sit by idly while he refuses to act.

As long as the illegitimate communist Cuban regime continues to deny the people their freedom, democracy, and basic human rights, I am going to fight alongside them and demand action.

Today, the Senate can do something. Today, the U.S. Senate can pass a resolution honoring Cuban activists like Jose Daniel Ferrer, condemning the Cuban dictatorship's repression, and calling for the international community to stand with the Cuban people. I have introduced a resolution that does exactly that, and it is something that everyone in the Chamber should agree with.

I am thankful for Senators MARCO RUBIO and MIKE BRAUN for cospon-

soring this resolution. I am also thankful for MARIO DIAZ-BALART, Congresswoman SALAZAR, and Congressman GIMENEZ for introducing the companion resolution in the House.

We must make sure our message to the Cuban people is clear: America has not and will not forget you. We have seen your bravery and courage. We have heard your calls for freedom. You have risked everything for the freedom of Cubans across the island. You are an inspiration to us all.

I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate in Spanish.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(English translation of the statements made in Spanish are as follows:)

We must make sure our message to the Cuban people is clear: America has not and will not forget you.

We have seen your bravery and courage. We have heard your calls for freedom.

You have risked everything for the freedom of Cubans across the island. You are an inspiration to us all.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 489, which is at the desk. I further ask that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me first say that I rise, in the first instance, before having heard the Senator's remarks, to say that I have serious concerns about the junior Senator from Florida's lack of respect for the regular order of the Senate.

On July 11, 2021, the Cuban people took to the streets in unprecedented protests, demanding democracy and the end of decades of dictatorship. Subsequently, the Senate came together in unanimous consent to pass my S. Res. 310. My bipartisan legislation expressed our unwavering solidarity with the Cuban people and called for the release of all political prisoners detained unjustly by the Diaz-Canel regime.

My legislation was the result of bipartisan negotiations, and it was approved unanimously by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That is what regular order looks like, and it is a process that strengthens the impact of our work on foreign policy when we can speak together in one voice to promote that foreign policy, whether it is to the Cuban regime or whether it is in any other place in the world.

Now, I need to make the point that the junior Senator from Florida routinely disregards this process. In this particular case, not only has this resolution not been marked up by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, not only is it not bipartisan—as far as I know, nobody has been offered even the

opportunity to join it—but it hasn't even been introduced so that the Parliamentarian would decide where it would be sent to committee for referral for consideration. It hasn't even been introduced. It has not received the review it deserves. In fact, it has not received any formal review.

As I have repeatedly said as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I stand ready to work with any Member—and have done so—on initiatives that advance the national security interests of the United States and the defense of democracy and human rights. While there may be some urgent moments that require us to move legislation directly to the floor, regular order exists for a reason—to facilitate consensus and ensure that the legislation we consider on the floor reflects the input and expertise of Senators who sit on the relevant committees of jurisdiction.

Now, I have spent the last several days listening to my Republican colleagues talk about the fullness of legislative debate, of not preempting legislative debate, of not preempting prolonged legislative debate in the context of the filibuster. Here is a piece of legislation that hasn't even been introduced, but it is being brought directly to the floor. How does that promote legislative debate? It doesn't. It doesn't.

I happen to agree with the Senator about his focus here as it relates to those who are struggling inside of Cuba to create freedom, but I want to send a clarion message that I will not simply allow legislation that is in the purview of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to come directly to the floor without even an introduction, without review, without any debate, and then believe that one will just allow it to go through on unanimous consent. That is not how the Senate works.

I would urge the junior Senator from Florida to consider this for future legislative endeavors, especially as we are also concerned about the filibuster and extended debate. Well, this is the worst example of not having extended debate.

Lastly, I deeply disagree with the Senator's characterization—I wasn't even going to reference it—in having listened to his remarks, about the Biden administration. The Biden administration sanctioned individuals in Cuba, high-ranking individuals of the Cuban military, who have never been sanctioned before. The Biden administration led a multilateral effort for the condemnation of what happened in Cuba as a result of the citizens of Cuba seeking to simply redress their grievances against the dictatorship that exists there, and brought in countries that have never ever expressed themselves in such a way before. The Biden administration worked with the Secretary General of the OAS to take the strong position that the Senator referred to.

So I hate to say it, but this almost comes across as a naked, political, par-

tisan effort to try to promote some perspective when, in fact, we should be embracing this together through regular order, in a bipartisan process, which the Cuban people, particularly those suffering inside of Cuba, deserve. However, because of this particular moment and at this particular time and having given the Senator good notice about other future endeavors—this is not the first time—I will not object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 489) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I am glad to see this resolution pass.

I want to thank my colleagues, Senators MARCO RUBIO and MIKE BRAUN, for cosponsoring this resolution and Congressman DIAZ-BALART, Congresswoman SALAZAR, and Congressman GIMENEZ for supporting this resolution in the House.

In my roles as a U.S. Senator and the Governor of Florida, I have had the honor of meeting and speaking with countless Cubans who have risked their lives to flee Castro's brutal regime. Many of them came here with nothing, scarred by the oppression of the regime but hopeful for a new life. With what little they had, they started businesses and families and built thriving communities and are a major part of the economy of Florida.

We have all seen their resolve to fight for freedom, support their families, and contribute to their communities. They are an example of the American dream and a testimony to the ills of communism and socialism. The Cuban people are a source of inspiration for all of us. They show us what can be accomplished when you have freedom and opportunity.

That is why we continue to fight for the end of communism in Cuba and for the freedom and liberties of every Cuban family. It is why we should all join them and say "Abajo la Dictadura!" "Patria, vida y Libertad!"

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

FILIBUSTER

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, our democracy is protected by its institutional checks on unlimited power. The three branches of government are not the only manifestation of the careful balancing achieved by the Framers of the Constitution. Within the legislative branch, the Senate's unique traditions protect the rights of the minority party by allowing extended debate and by requiring a supermajority vote to pass legislation, with few exceptions. These rules have helped to make the U.S. Senate the greatest deliberative body in the world.

Before commenting further on the importance of the extended debate and the 60-vote requirement for passing legislation, I want to point out a critical protection built into the Senate's procedures. Changing the rules requires 67 votes, not 60 votes, not 51 votes—67 votes.

But in a power grab that would be incredibly destructive to the functioning of the Senate, the Democratic leader is proposing to circumvent the rules in order to eviscerate the filibuster because he does not have anywhere near the 67 votes required to rewrite the Senate rules. Instead, he will propose to "change the rules by breaking the rules," as former Democratic Senator Carl Levin, a true giant of the Senate, put it when arguing against a similar ploy in 2013.

As one of Senator Levin's predecessors, Arthur Vandenberg, warned in 1949, if the majority can change the rules of the Senate at will, "there are no rules except the transient, unregulated wishes of a majority of whatever quorum is temporarily in control of the Senate."

Both Senators Levin and Vandenberg actually favored the rule change being considered at the time, but each recognized that "breaking the rules to change the rules" would irreparably harm the Senate and, thus, our country.

Democrats well understand the consequences of what they are proposing. Just 5 short years ago, Senator Chris Coons and I wrote a letter urging Senate leaders to preserve the 60-vote threshold for legislation. That letter was signed by 61 Senators: 28 Republicans, 32 Democrats, and 1 Independent. This total not only represented a majority of Senators but also a majority of the Republican caucus, a majority of the Democratic Caucus, and the current Vice President.

How well I remember seeking signatures on the Senate floor for that letter. Holding a green folder with the letter inside, I approached Senators on both sides of the aisle to achieve my goal of a total of 60 Senators signing, representing a majority of each caucus.

Not a single Senator whom I approached said no to signing the letter, not one. Quite the contrary, each was eager to sign the letter, and many thanked me for leading the effort to make clear that whatever our disagreements on a supermajority vote for nominees, they were firmly committed to keeping the filibuster for legislation. They understood its vital importance to the Senate and to our country. This is what our letter stated, in part:

[W]e are united in our determination to preserve the ability of Members to engage in extended debate when bills are on the Senate floor.

We are mindful of the unique role the Senate plays in the legislative process, and we are steadfastly committed to ensuring that this great American institution continues to serve as the world's greatest deliberative body. Therefore, we are asking you to join us